

As you may be aware, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has begun the process of examining ways to restructure its operations in order to save money. This has caused some serious concern about changes in mail service in small communities across the country, including certain communities in Nebraska. In many rural places, the post office has functioned for years not only as a place for receiving and sending mail but as a social gathering place and community hub.

In recent congressional testimony, Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe indicated that the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) continues to operate in a precarious financial situation and significant changes are needed to ensure its viability. The USPS faces a significant budget shortfall this year and in the future due to a greater reliance on e-mail to send messages and other factors. It has also been noted that most of the post offices being reviewed for closure bring in less than \$27,500 in annual revenue, yet many of them cost more than \$100,000 to operate.

In Nebraska, more than 100 post offices are being considered for closure (to see the entire list, visit <http://about.usps.com/news/electronic-press-kits/expandedaccess/states/nebraska.htm>). In eastern Nebraska, the list includes post offices in Bee, Cedar Creek, Cordova, Craig, Davey, Douglas, Goehner, Hallam, Malmo, Manley, Martell, Morse Bluff, Nehawka, Otoe, Panama, Prague, Staplehurst, Snyder, Thurston, Uehling, Winslow, Waterbury, Belden, Brownville, Clatonia, Concord, Dawson, Dixon, Du Bois, Elk Creek, Filley, Magnet, Shubert, Stella, Table Rock, and Verdon. According to the USPS, each post office in question will be evaluated on revenue, hours of operation, and proximity to other post offices.

My Nebraska House of Representatives colleagues and I have urged the Postmaster General to consider the USPS's obligation to maintain efficient mail delivery to all Americans and the special challenges posed by the closing of post offices in rural communities. We also asked that rural citizens be allowed the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process by giving input and being afforded the right to appeal.

If a post office in your town or near you is being considered for closure, please know that the USPS has not yet finalized any decisions. All residents of the post office's zip code will be surveyed to understand how the proposed closure affects them. The USPS will also host community meetings to receive customers' input and discuss alternatives, such as "village post offices" which would provide services in a local store, gas station, library, or town hall. Local groups will have the ability to appeal closures to the Postal Regulatory Commission. To find out if a public hearing has been scheduled yet in your community, contact your local postmaster.

Citizens have gathered at rural post offices for generations to conduct social and economic transactions vital to their community. As the USPS is forced to address existing financial constraints, the need to examine cost-savings measures, appropriate consolidations of resources, and service delivery options suited to modern demographic trends is going to have to be part of a reasoned and prudential discussion. However, rural America should not be targeted disproportionately. If you have questions or concerns about the USPS and its decision-making process regarding rural post offices, please contact my offices in Lincoln, Norfolk, or Fremont.

###